

THINK PINK: 1,000 Pink Cherry Trees Bringing Beauty to Howard County and Hope to Cancer Patients and their Families

By Rachelina Bonacci, Executive Director of Howard County Tourism

Think you need to go to Washington D.C. to experience the beauty of springtime cherry blossoms? Not anymore! Blossoms of Hope: The Howard County Cherry Tree Project is a new celebration taking root and growing in nearby Howard County, Maryland.

"It is a project that is designed to not only enhance the county's existing attractions but also provide a foundation upon which future tourism opportunities can be built. It is a vision out of which a new, unique, county-wide spring celebration may take shape-- one that may ultimately become a signature event for Howard County and maybe even the State. It is a vision we are calling Blossoms of Hope: The Howard County Cherry Tree Project" announced Howard County Executive James N. Robey.

The ultimate goal---1,000 pink cherry trees across Howard County's parks, libraries, historic sites and scenic byways blossoming simultaneously each April – to beautify and beckon people to visit and experience the many attractions found throughout the county. The beauty of the Blossoms of Hope project goes far beyond the trees' annual display of color. As the name suggests, the project is about giving hope to individuals and families who are coping with cancer. Each cherry tree officially planted as part of this project offers a generous donation to Howard County's Claudia Mayer Cancer Resource and Image Center.

Tina Broccolino, co-chair of the project said "We support the Blossoms of Hope as it provides funding to the Claudia Mayer Cancer Resource and Image Center, which allows the Center to further its mission of being Howard County's center of hope and support for cancer patients, their families and friends." She also hopes that as the trees enhance the beauty of Howard County, it will increase tourism and stimulate the economy. She added "we too purchased a tree to leave a legacy for our children, grandchildren and future generations."

"The magic of the cherry tree project touched me deeply the first time I read about it. I knew that it was the perfect memorial for my beloved deceased husband who had loved living in Howard County. I was blessed to have been the first purchaser of a cherry tree that now stands in loving memory of Howard L. Millman. May it blossom forever" said Rae Millman Lapine.

Every National Arbor Day, the last Friday in April, Howard County dedicates the sponsored trees in a ceremony in Centennial Park. The project already more than a third of the way toward its goal of 1,000 trees has been embraced by the local community. Howard County Department of Recreation and Parks' John Byrd and his team who planted the trees said "I can't think of a better way to celebrate a loved one than to improve the quality of life for everyone by beautifying the County landscape with these pink trees."

The Friends of Ann Moon, a group of women from all-over the mid-Atlantic who rallied and pitched in together to buy a tree said "When we heard of the Blossoms of Hope project we thought it would be a wonderful way to honor our friend who was fighting

breast cancer. She loved gardening, nature and enjoyed walks in Centennial Park with her many friends. The tree became the perfect gift and she looked forward to its first blossoms. Now when we see the tree it is a gentle reminder of all the joy it brought to her"

New family traditions are growing according to Matthew Eyre of Eyre Bus, Tour & Travel and president of Howard County Tourism's Board of Directors "We purchased a tree last year for my mother as a Mother's Day gift. We are now going to make it a fun family tradition to visit the park with Mom to see the trees every year on Mother's Day"

Howard County businesses are now invited to purchase and plant trees on their property to further grow the project. "Turf Valley Resort is proud to be the first Blossoms of Hope corporate sponsor and look forward to spring when the many trees we planted blossom on our fairways." But the Claudia Mayer Cancer Resource and Image Center, is not the only beneficiary of all of this effort added Peter Mangione, owner of Turf Valley Resort. "Everyone who lives or works here is Thinking Pink!"

Everyone living in or visiting Howard County truly can enjoy the trees "The Blossoms of Hope project is one we are sincerely committed to supporting. As I drive near Centennial Park and see all the trees, I can hardly wait to see the pink blossoms this spring. Just thinking about it cheers up my day" said Chris Quinn, Insight 180 Creative, in-kind supporter of Blossoms of Hope.

Dessie Moxley, project co-chair on behalf of the Howard County Garden Clubs added "Blossoms of Hope, is a perfect partnership. Howard County now has an attraction to relate and connect it to the metropolitan area --cherry blossoms. Then, to attract needed donations, Claudia Mayer Cancer Center is ideal since so many are acquainted with this cancer treatment and imaging center. Aesthetics and compassion are a winning combination."